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## THE BROTHERS OF SINCERITY.

ISLÂM, the religion of Muhammad, is, at bottom, merely Judaism carried to its logical result. Therein man has transferred all the worth he possesses to God, thus transforming Him into a being of infinite, irresponsible power, while he himself, emptied of all good, writhes and grovels before Him as a worm of the dust,—a mere will-less, helpless automaton. Muhammad's addition to Judaism was, that he claimed to be the representative of God, and to speak and command in his name. *There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Apostle of God*: such is the creed of Islâm.

When Muhammad died, in 632 A.D., Islâm was still confined to Arabia, for whose half-barbarous tribes it was intended. These it united for the first time in history, giving them a common religion, and a sense of national unity which was not slow in making itself felt. Muhammad's earliest revelation had begun, *Read, in the name of thy Lord*. An authoritative book to read and a Lord to obey: these are the whole of Islâm, and it sufficed for the unreflecting sons of Arabia. But when, under the Khalifs, or successors of the prophet, the new religion extended to lands of ancient culture, to Syria (635) and Mesopotamia (637-640), and sought to impose itself upon these, it had to justify itself to peoples schooled in thought and versed in history. If these peoples were conquered politically by force of arms, they necessarily conquered intellectually and æsthetically, by reason of their superior culture, to certain charms of which the Arab chieftains were by no means insensible. Thus, under the Khalifs, while the brute force lay in the hands of the Arabs, the intellectual power was in the heads of the subject peoples. In Syria, the Arabs came in contact with Syrian and Greek Christians, and with Harranian pagans, deeply influenced by Greek, chiefly Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic, thought, and also by Babylonian astronomy and astrology. All these sects contained learned and thoughtful men, who could not accept Islâm without, in

some way, conforming it to their cultivated reason. In Babylon, likewise, the Arabs came in contact with Persian Mazdeans, Babylonian polytheists, Manichæans, Jews, Ssabians, and various sects, with more or less eclectic and compound creeds, whose cultured members, in accepting Islâm, interpreted it in terms of their own thought.

Two doctrines there were in the faith of Islâm which especially repelled these cultivated thinkers, and which they, therefore, sought to soften and modify. These were (1) the complete transcendence of God, His perfect simplicity, and consequent unrelatedness to the world, (2) the complete unfreedom of the human will, and the consequent impossibility of rational, ethical, free life,—both zealously defended by the Arab *Mutakallemuna*, or Schoolmen, who, in imitation of the Jewish scribes, rabbis, and geonim, taking their stand upon their revealed texts, deduced therefrom, by methods more or less capricious and unscientific, the results they desired. Such men, of course, exalted revelation, and did their best to discredit reason, philosophy, and science, thus paving the way for fanaticism and a return to barbarism. In opposition to these, there arose a number of men, chiefly of pagan, Mazdean, and Manichæan faith, who sought to interpret these and other Muslim doctrines in the light of the philosophy then current in the East and common to them all, a philosophy compounded of Aristotelianism and Neo-Platonism, and thus summing up all the results of Greek thought,—in a somewhat unsystematized form, indeed.

The tendency championed by these men began away back in the century of the Hijrah, but did not take definite form until the following century, when the sect of the Mu'tazila, or Separatists (Pharisees), was founded by Wâsil ibn 'Ata. Though sorely persecuted, this sect maintained itself in secret, and made common cause with the philosophic schools, which, under the fostering care of several liberal-minded Khalifs, began about the middle of the eighth century. Their rise was marked by the translation into Arabic, chiefly by Nestorian Christians, of the works of the Neo-Platonists and of Aristotle. After this there appeared in Bagdad and Basra

several philosophers of vast learning and profound thought. Chief among these were the Arab Al Kendi (780-865), and the probably Turkish Al Fārābī (880-950), who won over a considerable following to the study of Greek thought.

But philosophy was never popular among the Arabs, and a time soon came when both the Mu'tazila and the philosophers thought it wise to pursue their thought in secret. Even the saintly Al Fārābī withdrew to Aleppo and Damascus. Unwilling to rouse the fanaticism of the Arabs, small knots of earnest thinkers, devoted to free thought, met in private places, to teach, to learn, and to discuss, and thus, probably in the last quarter of the tenth century, when the darkness of Europe was almost at its deepest, there was gradually formed at Basra what may fairly be called a secret society, composed of solid thinkers and high-minded men, whose aim was to combat the worst teachings of Islām, particularly the two above referred to, and to reduce the new religion to such a form that the arts and sciences of civilized life might flourish under its auspices, and a stop be put to the growing darkness, confusion, and barbarism of the time. Their aim, in fact, was to transform Islām from a religion into a philosophy, from blind faith in the words of a prophet claiming supernatural inspiration, into a reasoned theory of nature and life, through which man, understanding his origin, place, and destiny, might direct his steps to his true end. To put the matter bluntly, they undertook to render the harsh, crude superstition of the Koran innocuous by transmuting it, through absorption, into the Neo-Platonic Aristotelianism then popular in the East. This system drew its doctrines partly from the genuine works of Aristotle, and partly from certain spurious treatises bearing his name, but really due to the Neo-Platonists, and containing doctrines widely different from his,—in fact, a whole system of evolutionary agathism, governed by spiritual laws. Chief among these treatises was the so-called "Theology of Aristotle," an abstract of the last three "Enneads" of Plotinus, made apparently by Porphyry, in Syriac, for his Syrian countrymen, in the days of Zenobia, that is, towards the end of the third century A.D., and translated into Arabic, first of all philosophic

works. Its contents largely determined the whole subsequent course of Arabic, and, later, of Jewish and Christian thought.

Of the personal relations and history of the members of the new philosophical society we know very little. Five names have been handed down to us on good authority: (1) Abu Suleiman Muhammad ibn Nasr al Busti, surnamed al Maqdisiyy, or, the Pilgrim (to Jerusalem); (2) Abu 'l Hasan Ali ibn Harun az Zanjani; (3) Abu Achmed an Nahrajuri; (4) Al 'Aufi; (5) Zaid ibn Rifa'a. Of these the last seems to have been the most illustrious. The bearer of it is spoken of as a man of surpassing insight and lucid understanding, an elegant writer both in prose and in verse, and an eloquent speaker. He and his four fellows seem to have united their knowledge and efforts in order to write the Cyclopædia, of which we shall speak presently. The members of the society seem to have led a quiet, unobtrusive, almost monkish life, striving after knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and devoting themselves to that noblest form of charity, the spiritual elevation of all who came in contact with them. They were evidently well acquainted, not only with Islâm, Christianity, and Judaism, but also with the religions of the East. Their sympathies were of the widest sort, extending even to the lower animals, whose place in the hierarchy of evolution—and they were evolutionists of the most pronounced type—they estimated far more correctly than any one ever did before or since. In all respects they produce the impression of being men of the finest culture and most exquisite sympathy. They assumed the name of *Ikhwân us Safâ*, which may mean "Brothers of Sincerity," "Brothers of Purity," or, perhaps, "The True Brotherhood." The society meant by it to imply that its purpose was a pure, simple, sincere, kindly, brotherly, rational human life,—a life in which its members should stand in true, essential relations to each other and to all the world. It seems not improbable that it took for its model the ancient brotherhood of the Pythagoreans, with the existence of which it was certainly acquainted. Like this, it was a closed body, into which admission could be gained only after a careful scrutiny and examination, and of which the members were

divided into classes according to the degree of their spiritual advancement, while all were bound together by a strong tie of affectionate friendship. Like this, also, it regarded its philosophical system as merely the formal element in a rational social life, in other words, as simply educational. This is the fact which renders the undertaking of this far-off society on the banks of the Tigris, nine hundred years ago, of interest to all persons engaged in the work of education, or caring for its results. Indeed, this undertaking is deserving of special study at the present time, for a special reason.

The most obvious and crying defect of education in our time and country is its want of unity. This is due to its want of definite aim, since aim is what gives unity to everything, whether action or the product of action. There can be no unity in action which is not guided by a single aim; no unity in a product which is not made for a definite purpose. Now, the purpose of education must certainly be to enable its subjects to attain the fullest possible self-realization. About this all men are agreed; but, when we come to ask what such self-realization is, they immediately fall into discord. There is at the present day no general agreement as to the nature of that ideal of human realization which is the aim of education, and hence no principle to unite, in an aimful hierarchy, the elements of education itself, or to determine what these elements shall be. Hence the uncertainty, the hesitation, the continual change of subject and method, that mark, confuse, and retard the education of to-day. Ask the great body of our teachers and professors what is the aim of the education they are giving, and not one in a hundred will be able to give a rational answer. Some will say, "We want to make good citizens;" others, "We want to make good men and women." Yes, to be sure; but the question remains, What is a good citizen, a good man, a good woman? Here opinions will differ widely, because there is no general agreement as to what goodness is, nor can there be, until there is a generally accepted theory of the universe, since goodness expresses a relation to such a universe. Plato, in one of his works, asks the question, What is justice? and finds that he has to write

his "Republic," with its elaborate scheme of social relations, before he can give an answer that is more than a mere empty form. When the answer, Justice is a giving every one his own, is offered, it appears entirely satisfactory, but, on closer scrutiny, turns out to be entirely useless, until some method is discovered of determining what is every one's own. So, in the present case, to answer the question, What is the aim of education? by saying, To make good men and women, or good citizens, does not help us, unless there can be found some method of determining what is meant by "good" in such connection, and this involves a theory or conception of the universe and of man's place in it.

Now, while we may lament that the absence of any such conception leaves our present education in the chaotic condition in which we find it, we can easily see how such a state of things has come about. The old mediæval conception, based upon supernatural revelation, or what was considered such, is passing away, and losing its hold upon practice, and no new conception, based upon science, as all future conceptions must be, has yet arisen to take its place. We have, no doubt, certain cunningly spun cobweb-theories of an *a priori* sort; but, as they do not correspond to the facts of the world, or even to universal intelligence, they are of no permanent value. What we most need to-day is a co-operative effort on the part of a little group of earnest men, well versed in the different sciences, physical and spiritual, to present such a scheme of the universe as shall form the basis of a rational, saving education, leaving room, of course, for continual additions, modifications, and improvements. While we are anxiously waiting for this, it cannot be but interesting and instructive to consider the system of the "Brothers of Sincerity," put forward with this view, and based on such science as existed in the tenth century in the most cultivated circles.

This system is laid down in a Cyclopædia, which must have been written about the year 1000 A.D., and which was printed in Calcutta, for the first time, in 1812, and again in 1842, in four large volumes of densely crowded, unvocalized Arabic.

The work is divided into fifty-one tracts or treatises (*rasāil*), which again are arranged under four heads :

- (1) Propædæutic and Logic, thirteen treatises.
- (2) Natural Sciences, seventeen treatises.
- (3) The Rational World-Soul, ten treatises.
- (4) Revealed Law, eleven treatises.

In this arrangement, we have an ascent from the formal and abstract to the real and concrete, from the simple and immediate to the complex and mediate. The introduction of revelation distinguishes it from all Greek classifications. Let us deal with these four heads in their order, and

(I.) PROPÆDEUTIC AND LOGIC, with its thirteen treatises.

No. 1 deals with Number, its essence and multitude, showing that the form of number in the soul corresponds to form in material things, and that the doctrine of number is the spring of all science and wisdom. Its purpose is to exercise beginners in thought in meditating on the true essence of things and inquiring into their primal origin. Here we can discern the effect of the teaching of Pythagoras and his school.

No. 2 treats of Geometry, its essence and kinds, and aims at enabling the soul to rise from the sensible to the spiritual, and to grasp pure forms apart from matter ; in other words, to abstract. Here the philosophy of Plato is drawn upon.

No. 3 takes up Astronomy, and shows the composition of the stellar world, its spheres, mansions, movements, etc. Its purpose is to rouse the soul to a longing for its proper home among the spheres. Here we are brought face to face with that theory which we can trace back to Aristotle and Plato (who perhaps derived it from Babylonia), and which identifies spiritual elevation with distance from the centre of the earth, itself regarded as the centre of the universe. This notion pervades the entire middle age, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, and finds classical expression in the *Comedy* of Dante, which ends with these words: " But already my desire and the will was turning, as a wheel that is evenly moved, through the love that moves the sun and the other stars." It was for attacking this theory, which was far more than astronomical,



being the form under which intellectual and moral existence was conceived, that Giordano Bruno was burned in 1600.

No. 4 treats of Geography, showing that the earth is a globe, and giving the reasons why the soul descended from its true home into this world. Its purpose is to lead the soul to admire the wonders of heaven and earth, the wonders within and without, to convince it that God is the prime reality, and induce it to prepare for death, which is spiritual birth from the unreal to the real. Here we have the Neo-Platonic doctrine of the lapse or fall of the soul, a doctrine derived directly, perhaps, from later Judaism, but no doubt of Babylonian or Syrian origin. It is interesting to find the doctrine of the earth's sphericity taught here.

No. 5 deals with Music, showing that the measures of music are so many medicines for the soul, just as the different drugs are for the body, and that the revolving spheres, by rubbing against each other, produce tones and melodies, like those of a lyre or harp. Its purpose is to make the soul eager to ascend through the melodious spheres and meet the spirits of prophets, martyrs, and mystic seers. Dante adopts this notion in his *Paradise*.

No. 6 relates to Geometric Number or Quantity, its kinds and relations, that is, to the theory of symmetry and æsthetics. Its purpose is to initiate the rational soul into the deeper relations of things and actions. These have different properties, which may, or may not, harmonize. The faculty of æsthetic judgment investigates these properties, and so discovers the rules of Art.

No. 7 treats of the different Liberal Arts or Sciences, enumerating and classifying them, so as to show their nature and purpose, and guide the soul in its endeavor after a unitary conception of the world. Here we have an Encyclopædia of the Sciences.

No. 8 deals with the Practical Arts, their number, kinds, and methods. In order to do this, it has to reveal to the soul its own substance, as the author of the arts, and its relation to the body and its members, which are merely instruments of the creative soul. A philosophic Encyclopædia of the Arts !

No. 9 examines the differences of Temperament and Character, with the view of enabling the soul to attain the proper mood and develop a perfect character. Here we have a system of Ethics.

In these nine tracts is presented a bird's-eye view of the field or matter of science, beginning with the simplest and most abstract conceptions and going on to the most complex and concrete. The next four deal with Logic, or the form of science, and are based on the *Introduction* (εἰσαγωγή) of Porphyry, and the "Organon" of Aristotle.

No. 10 deals with Porphyry's *Introduction*, on the five notions or "words"—Genus, Species, Difference, Property, and Accident,—which proved a fruitful source of dispute through the entire Middle Age, a single sentence giving rise to Christian Scholasticism.

No. 11 discusses Aristotle's ten *Categories*, or classes of existence, and shows that all things may be subsumed under them.

No. 12 is occupied with Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*, which treats of the Proposition, its component parts and different forms.

No. 13 deals with Aristotle's *Analytics*, that is, with the Syllogism and the Method of Scientific Proof.

The purpose of these four tracts is to make the rational soul aware of its own forms and faculties, and the method by which it may reach truth. From these we pass to

(II.) The NATURAL SCIENCES, occupying seventeen tracts. Here, again, we rise from general and abstract notions to things more and more concrete and individual.

No. 14 (1) treats of Matter, Form, Space, Time, and Motion, and is based on Aristotle's *Physics*. It is called the "Torch of Being."

No. 15 (2) is devoted to the General Form of the Physical World,—earth, heaven and its various grades and spheres, the glorious Throne of God. Here, as in I. 3, we have the mediæval theory of the physical universe, according to which the "Throne of God" is in the outermost sphere. (See Dante, *Paradise*, XXX., 38 sqq.). In the famous "throne-verse" of

the Koran (II. 256), we read: "His throne encompasseth the heavens and the earth, and it wearies him not to keep them; for he is high and glorious."\* The aim of this tract is to show that all action in the universe is due to the universal soul acting in obedience to God.

No. 16 (3) treats of *Genesis and Decay*, of the forms of the four elements, as the components of the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds, and of their transmutation into each other under the influence of the stars and revolving spheres. It draws its materials from the *Περὶ Γενέσεως καὶ Φθορᾶς* and other works of Aristotle, including the spurious *Theology*. In this tract we have the mediæval substitute for Chemistry.

No. 17 (4) treats of *Meteorology*, and is based on Aristotle's work of that name.

No. 18 (5) is devoted to *Mineralogy*, enumerating the different minerals and trying to account for their origin. Its purpose is to show that the first product of the universal soul is the sublunary world, and that in this the partial souls (all individual souls are parts of the universal soul) begin their career. Starting in minerals at the earth's centre, they advance through plants and animals up to man, and thence rise through the superlunary spheres, as angels, up to union with God. Here we have the Arab doctrine of evolution, which hardly differs from the Darwinian, except in not recognizing the "struggle for life" as an agent in the process. Instead of this, the older theory puts the natural desire of all beings to return to their source. In this tract, as well as in the following, the "Theology of Aristotle" is largely drawn upon.†

No. 19 (6) deals with the *Essence of Nature*, and the manner in which it acts upon the four elements, producing the three kingdoms of nature. Its purpose is to show the action of the universal soul, its essence, and its relation to the spherul intelligences. (Cf. Dante, *Convivio*, II.)

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\* Cf. Psalm ciii. 19. The notion of God's sitting on a throne goes back to 1 Kings xxii. 19. See D. H. Müller, *Ezechiel-Studien*, p. 9. Cf. Koran, xxxix. 75; xl. 7.

† Cf. Dieterici, *Der Darwinismus im zehnten u. neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Leipzig, 1878.

No. 20 (7) is devoted to *Botany*, enumerating and describing the various plants, and showing how they are pervaded by the plant-soul, how they spring up and grow, and what their uses are. Stress is laid upon the fact that there is no break between the mineral, vegetable, and animal worlds. The palm-tree, being male and female, is on the line between plants and animals.

No. 21 (8) treats of *Zoölogy*, following Aristotle mainly. The highest of the animals is man, who forms the link between them and the angels, the bridge between hell and heaven. This tract contains a long and delightful story entitled "The Case of the Animals *vs.* Man before the King of the Genii." The scene is laid on an island in the Indian Ocean. The animals, claimed by men as their slaves, plead their own cause, and present a picture of human injustice and cruelty that is truly appalling. Men are defeated at every point, and the case would go against them, but for the fact of their immortality. On the ground of this, that men are ends in themselves, the king of the genii counsels the animals to serve them, but strongly enjoins on men to treat them kindly, and not over-tax them. The deep human feeling of this story bears testimony to the high culture of the "Brothers of Sincerity." It would be hard to match it to-day.

The next nine tracts deal with various aspects of man, as a physical, sensuous being.

No. 22 (9) investigates the structure of the human body, *Anatomy*, and finds that man is a microcosm, a state, in which the soul is king, the representative of God upon earth, a book written by God's own hand. In knowing himself, man knows God. These notions are about as remote from those of Islâm as can well be conceived, and are derived from the "Theology of Aristotle," in which, as has been said, "self-introversion is represented as an intellectual ascension into heaven." (Cf. Dante, *Paradise*, I., 7 sqq.)\*

No. 23 (10) treats of *Sense-Perception* and the perceived,

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\* Haneberg, quoted in Steinschneider, *Die hebraeischen Uebersetzungen des Mittelalters*, p. 243.

and contains a whole physiological theory of cognition. It shows how the senses seize their percepts, and carry them to the faculty of imagination, whose organ is in the front part of the brain, whence they pass on to the faculty of judgment, in the middle part of the brain, where they are again distinguished and seized in their true essence. Hence, again, they pass on to the faculty of retention, in the hinder part of the brain, where they lie ready to be recalled into consciousness by reminiscence. From this they proceed to the faculty of speech, which lies above the tongue, and by which they are translated into words, which, when accompanied by meanings, issuing from the soul, form significant speech. Hence also they proceed to the faculty of action, whose organs are the hands. These record them in books, to be preserved for future generations. Thus the experience of the race is accumulated and preserved in literature.

No. 24 (11) deals with the *Processes of Generation*, conception, and birth, the union of the soul with the embryo, and the influence of the stars upon the temperament and character of the child. The purpose of this tract is to show the condition of the simple soul, before it personifies itself and unites with the partializing body. (Cf. Dante, *Paradise*, I., 73 sqq.). Here we have a whole system of *Astrology*, as affecting human character,—something altogether abhorrent to the spirit of Islâm, and due to Neo-Platonism.

No. 25 (12) treats of Man as a Microcosm, in form similar to the Macrocosm, and having equivalents to the angels, genii, satans, and animal spirits of the latter, and shows that he resumes in himself the corporeal and spiritual worlds, and the meaning of all that exists. All this is purely Neo-Platonic.

No. 26 (13) shows how the partial soul grows in the human body, and how it may thus, before or after death, become an angel.

No. 27 (14) investigates the Limits of Human Knowledge, and shows that man may attain to a knowledge of his creator.

No. 28 (15) treats of Life and Death and the meaning of them, showing why the rational soul is united with the body till death, which is not to be feared, but to be welcomed as a

spiritual birth. All this is utterly foreign to Islâm, which knows of no souls separate from bodies.

No. 29 (16) considers the Nature of Spiritual and Bodily Pain and Pleasure, and how these are felt by disembodied spirits. It also shows that the wicked associate with devils in hell, the just with angels in heaven. Hell is in the world of becoming, heaven in that of being,—a Platonic doctrine.

No. 30 (17) treats of the Nature and Function of Language, and shows how there come to be different languages.

Having thus obtained a description of sensible nature, we next arise to a consideration of its system, as an expression of reason and a norm of ethical life. It is the distinguishing characteristic of all mediæval thought, from the days of the Neo-Platonists onwards, that, in making the system of the visible world a manifestation of goodness, reason, and soul, it makes it ethical; in other words, that it expresses moral elevation and degradation in terms of distance from the centre of the earth, itself the centre of the universe. This universe is an emanation from God, diminishing in intensity as, by receding from Him, it divides into many. The nearer anything is to the One, the higher it is in the grade of being.\* He (1) † is above subsistence, completion, perfection. ‡ From Him emanate (2) Reason, subsistent, complete, perfect, (3) through Reason, Soul, subsistent and complete, (4) through both of these, Primal Matter, which is merely subsistent. God is "the One, the Pure," standing to the universe in the same relation as unity to number. Reason, answering to duality, is, because it emanates from God, who is; it subsists, because God continually pours upon it His overflow of good; it is complete, because it accepts this overflow; it is perfect, because it communicates this overflow to the Soul. The Soul subsists, because it emanates from Reason, which subsists; it is complete, because Reason pours upon it the overflow received from God; it is not perfect, because it cannot again communicate this over-

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\* See Dante, *Paradise*, I. iii.

† This and the following numbers correspond to the grades of being which they mark.

‡ See "Theol. Arist.," p. 137; *Lib. de Causis*, § 21.

flow to Primal Matter, for the reason that this, not being complete, cannot receive it. The Soul, therefore, finds itself in this position, that, unless it can make matter complete, it can never itself be perfect. Its whole effort, therefore, is to complete matter. In its endeavor to pour out the divine overflow upon it, it creates the physical universe, whose incompleteness is shown by its motion; for the complete moves not. In this way are formed (5) Secondary or Tri-dimensional Matter,—*i.e.*, Body, (6) the Extended Universe, (7) Nature, sublunary and transient, (8) the Four Elements, (9) Things or Products. In these, the Soul having, at last, reached the lowest depth of multiplicity, begins a process of unification, whereby it perfects itself and completes matter. This is called the Return (*Ma'ād*, sometimes rendered Resurrection). It is exactly what we should call Evolution, whose existence is thus accounted for. Under the unifying influence of the Soul, matter becomes, first, minerals, then plants, then animals, and, lastly, man, who gradually ascends above transience, through the various moving spheres, until he reaches the quiet heaven of the Universal Soul, which can now pour upon him the divine overflow. Through this he turns to pure, complete, perfect reason; through it he becomes perfect, and enters into direct union with God. Thus, the whole process of the universe is a going forth from the unity of God to the absolute multiplicity of matter, and back from this again to the unity of God. The world is from God and to God.

With this explanation we can now turn to the ten tracts on (III.) THE RATIONAL WORLD-SOUL, or ETHICS.

No. 31 (1) discusses the principles of Reason according to Pythagoras, and shows how God, in creating, arranged the world on a basis of number, drawn out of unity. The content of this tract seems to have been partly drawn from certain pseudo-Pythagorean writings, current among the Arabs. One of these seems to have borne the title "The Republic of Reason." \*

No. 32 (2) states the principles of Reason, according to the

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\* See Müller, *Die griech. Philosophen in arab. Ueberlieferung*, p. 5.

"Brothers of Sincerity," and gives the grounds for the origin of the world, and the mediate causes for all existence.

No. 32 (3) discusses the saying of the philosophers, that the Universe is a great, good man, endowed with intellect and soul, a living world (ζῶον), obedient to its master, a complete whole.

No. 34 (4) deals with Reason and its object (Being), and the true nature of the substance of the soul. The passive Reason is the locus (τόπος) of all known forms (εἴδη).

No. 35 (5) treats of the Revolutions of the Stars and Spheres, and shows that the world came into being, and will again go out of being.

No. 36 (6) treats of the Love of the Soul (ἡ ἐρὰ νόσου), its nature and origin, and shows that the object of this love is God, for whom all creatures long (Cf. Dante, *Paradise*, I., 112 sqq.).

No. 37 (7) relates to the Return or Resurrection (see p. 452), and the nature of the ascension through the spheres and the knowledge gained in it. In this the whole system laid down in the Cyclopædia culminates. Dante's *Paradise* has the same subject.

No. 38 (8) deals with the various kinds of Motion, their beginning, culmination, and end, and shows how the world proceeded from the creator.

No. 39 (9) treats of Causes and Effects, and shows that they form a continuous circle. Here we are shown the origin, rules, and arrangement of the sciences (Cf. Dante, *Convivio*, II.) and taught that the universe is a self-determined whole.

No. 40 (10) treats of Definitions and Determinations, and tries to show the ideal essence of things, simple and compound.

Lastly, we come to that portion of the Cyclopædia which, however much affected by Greek thought, draws its first principle from Semitism, from Islâm :

(IV.) THE DIVINE LAW, or REVELATION, in eleven tracts.

No. 41 (1) treats of Opinions, Doctrines, Dogmas, Religions, Prophecy, and the views of different philosophers regarding them. It shows that all philosophies and all religions seek



the salvation of the soul, and try to point out the way whereby it ascends from the hell of the lower world to the paradise of the spheres,—the path of mystic vision. Most sects miss the true path.

No. 42 (2) treats of the Way to God, and shows that it leads through the civic and cathartic virtues up to the theoretic virtues, by which death, resurrection, and eternal reward or punishment are contemplated.

No. 43 (3) exhibits the Faith and Teachings of the "Brothers of Sincerity." This faith includes a belief in the immortality of the individual soul, one of the chief dogmas of Islâm.

No. 44 (4) describes the Life of the "Brothers of Sincerity," which, if somewhat formal and monastic, was full of sweet reason, compassion, sympathy, and love. As it is from these two tracts that we derive our knowledge of the life-ideal of the "Brothers," we must stop for a moment to consider it somewhat in detail.

As we have already seen, the "Brothers," in imitation, probably, of the Pythagoreans, had formed themselves into groups, or lodges, for the pursuit of study and a common life of purity, simplicity, and helpfulness. The guide of their life was science, including revelation, which was reduced to the form of science. Like the Pythagoreans, they were hospitable to all knowledge, excluding no branch of study from attention. They professed to draw their doctrines from four kinds of books:

(1) Books dealing generally with the Matter and Form of Knowledge,—Propædæutic and Logic (Aristotle).

(2) Books of Revelation,—the Torah, the Gospel, the Psalms, the Koran, and other prophetic writings.

(3) Books on Physics, and the products of human art.

(4) Books on Mystic Philosophy (Neo-Platonic chiefly) dealing with the ultimate concepts of being. Their social bond was friendship or love, and in this they agreed with the Epicureans and early Christians, both of whom, strange to say, they resembled in many respects. Four degrees of spiritual attainment were recognized, and on the basis of these they were divided into four grades or classes:

(1) The virtues demanded and cultivated in the first were

purity of soul-substance, quick comprehension, and rapid presentation. Its members were called the *Technics*, and were supposed to perfect themselves in sense-perception, and to recognize the value of sensible things. Their course extended from their fifteenth to their thirtieth year.

(2) The virtues proper to the second class were directive power, generosity, gentleness, sympathy, and compassion, in one word, enlightened judgment in dealing with men. They were called the *Directors*, and their course extended from their thirtieth to their fortieth year.

(3) The virtue characteristic of the third class was power to command and forbid, to overcome and determine, with a view to suppressing, with gentleness, kindness, and loving admonition, any disobedience or rebellion that might arise. They were called *Kings* and *Rulers*, and their course extended from their fortieth to their fiftieth year.

(4) The virtue peculiar to the fourth class was divine insight or inspiration, by which they rose to a vision of the eternal, and of the future life, its nature and conditions, and the way thither. Thus they were able to grasp "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." They were called *Angels*, and had complete authority over all the "Brothers." Their course lasted from their fiftieth year till their death, when they ascended to minister, as angels, by the throne of God.\*

It is easy to see that this system contains elements borrowed from Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and the later schools of Greek thought; perhaps, also, from the Syrian monks, from whom the Muslims directly derived their knowledge of Greek thought.

No. 45 (4) seeks to show the Philosophic Content of the Muslim Faith, and to explain the meaning of inspiration and obsession. It contains deep wisdom and a dark secret.

No. 46 (6) discusses the Nature of the Revealed Law, the conditions of prophecy, the qualifications of prophets, and the teachings of the servants of God. Its purpose is to show how the sacred writings have to be interpreted, in order to be brought into harmony with philosophy. Here allegory

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\* Cf. the closing lines of the Pythagorean "Golden Words."

plays a large part. It also tries to show who the expected Imâm, or temporal and spiritual head of Islâm, is. This was a bitterly disputed point between the different Muslim sects.\*

No. 47 (7) treats of the Call to God, to sincerity, and genuine love, and shows that the kingdom of truth and goodness must begin with a small knot of men who unite and agree to lead a certain life, and persistently to propagate a certain doctrine.

No. 48 (8) treats of the Actions of Spiritual Beings, and shows that there exist incorporeal, active essences in the world.

No. 49 (9) deals with the different Forms of Government, the grades of rulers, and the characters of the ruled. It shows that the supreme ruler is God, and that the best earthly ruler is he that stands nearest to Him.

No. 50 (10) shows that the universe is an ordered hierarchy of existences proceeding from God and returning to God. It bases this upon a verse from the Koran: "On the day when we shall roll up the heavens like a scroll, as we produced it at its first creation, we will draw it back again" (Sur. xxi. 104).

No. 51 (11) treats of Witchcraft, philtres, evil eye, forebodings, amulets, talismans, genii, satans, angels, and their relations and acts. Its purpose is to show that, besides men, there are on the earth other beings called spirits. Here we have a whole theory of spiritism, due partly to Arabism, partly to Neo-Platonism.

Such is the Cyclopædia of the "Brothers of Sincerity." I have dealt with it somewhat in detail, because it contains the best articulated statement in existence of that system of the universe, at once religious, ethical, and physical, which governed the thought of the civilized world for over two thousand years, until at last it perished in the flames of Giordano Bruno's funeral-pile, in the year 1600. This system must, as a whole, be abandoned, as incompatible with demonstrated truth; much of it must be rejected as pure superstition. And yet its interest for us is very great, and that for several reasons: (1) It represents the best thought of a long and momentous

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\* See Syed Ameer Ali, "Spirit of Islâm," pp. 467 sqq.

period in the history of human culture, a period in which man rose from nature to spirit, and, indeed, it is the very form of that process. (2) It is all-comprehensive, including nature and spirit, and showing that the former is dependent upon the latter. It thus gives us a universe which is completely rational, significant, and, therefore, optimistic. (3) It does its best to harmonize philosophy, or rational science, with revelation, and shows us the dangers with which any such attempt is necessarily beset. Such attempts must always fail, because they start by assuming a dualism which does not exist. A super-rational revelation made to reason is a contradiction in terms. (4) It shows man his place in the universe, his origin, his destiny, and, therefore, his duty. (5) It thus furnishes a complete scheme of education, or of man's true relations to the universe, enabling him who receives it to lead a perfectly rational, aimful, and, therefore, free life.

A system possessing these characteristics surely deserves our most careful attention and study. If we cannot accept it as it stands, we can certainly accept its spirit and its purpose. It did, with imperfect knowledge, marred by superstition, what ought to be again attempted with our ever-widening knowledge, from which superstition is being gradually eliminated. No free or rational life can ever be led except on the basis of a consciousness of a rational world. Such a world the system of the "Brothers of Sincerity" undertook to supply. Let us survey it for a moment. As we have seen, it is divided into four parts, and presupposes an elementary course in reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and versification. *First*, we have a Propædæutic, divided into two parts, the former supplying a general notion of the matter of science, from pure abstract number up to the most concrete human character; the latter, a theory of its forms. *Second*, we have a very comprehensive course in *Natural Science*, or the science of the sensible world, from abstract matter and form up to human speech. *Third*, we have a complete course in *Metaphysics* or *Philosophy*, the science of the intelligible world, as a hierarchic unity of manifold life, dependent upon a supreme principle, or world-soul. *Fourth*, we have a well articulated course in

*Theology*, or the science of that which, transcending human reason, must be accepted through revelation made to prophets, a science furnishing the ultimate grounds for ethical life, and for the hope of eternal life. The system is complete in every part, and though, as we have seen, it cannot be now accepted as a whole, it is, nevertheless, in the form of rationality, which is the important thing. Like all systems that arose before the days of experimental science, it assumes that everything knowable is known, and, therefore, presents itself as final, an absolute norm for thought and life. Looking away from this unavoidable defect, let us consider how the system affected life. On its intellectual side, it taught men to look upon themselves as having their origin and end in the one supreme principle of the universe, and as being essential parts of the sum of existence. On the emotional side, it made them feel that the entire universe was only their larger self, and that, since the same soul pulsed in all things, in wronging another they were wronging themselves. Thus, universal love and tenderness became the dominant impulses of their lives. On the volitional side, it made them labor with all their might to elevate the living world nearer and nearer to God, to instruct, purify, and discipline the souls of their fellows. It is difficult to imagine a nobler attitude towards life than that occupied by the "Brothers of Sincerity," whose name truly indicates their character and intent. Had they succeeded in disseminating their system, and making the Muslim world accept it, human civilization would have advanced in the eleventh century to a point which it will hardly have reached in the twentieth.

And this suggests the question, why they did not succeed, and why their system remained unknown to the world for many hundred years. The answer is, that they were many generations ahead of their time; that the world was not ready for their gospel. To live by insight and reason implies a degree of culture rare at any time, and one that certainly was not common in Babylonia in the year 1000. Among the men who flattered themselves that they could so live, was a contemporary of the "Brothers," Ibn Sina, one of the greatest of all thinkers; and his life offered an example which did not

invite imitation. His outspoken rationalism roused the fanaticism of the Arabs, and this found expression in the writings of the sceptical mystic, Al Ghazzali († 1111), whose name closes the list of Eastern Arabic thinkers. After him, a harsh, rigid orthodoxy, set off against a gross material, disingenuous mysticism, triumphed, as it still triumphs, in the East. About the close of the eleventh century, all that remained of Arabic philosophic writings found its way thence to the Far West, to Spain, giving rise to a philosophic movement of much promise, which lasted for a century. Among these writings was the Cyclopædia of the "Brothers of Sincerity," introduced into Spain, about 1020-30, by Muslim ibn Muhammad abu'l Kasim, called the Peripatetic. Here it influenced, not only the Arab thinkers of the West, such as Ibn Baja († 1138) and Ibn Tufail († 1185), but also, and in a still higher degree, the great Jewish thinkers, Ibn Gabirol, whose work, *Fons Vitæ*, is largely dependent upon it,\* and Joseph (ibn) Zaddik, whose *Microcosmus* † may be said to be an enlargement of tract 25. Thus it came to pass that, when, with the death of Ibn Rushd, in 1198, Arab philosophy definitively succumbed to fanaticism, its products, and, among them, the Cyclopædia of the "Brothers of Sincerity," continued to exert an influence upon the Jews, and, partly through them, and partly also directly, upon the Christians. It does not seem that the Cyclopædia was ever translated into either Hebrew or Latin; but, through the works mentioned above, it influenced the Schoolmen, and, later on, Spinoza, whose pantheism is nothing more than a reproduction of it in terms of Cartesian philosophy, just as Hegel's panlogism is merely a reproduction of Plotinus' system, in terms of Kantianism. Thus, the thought of the "Brothers" found its way into the modern world, and still lives on there, though now merely as an intellectual scheme, no longer as a world-view by which man may guide his life to the highest ends. What we need to do, is to take their Cyclopædia and write it over, in terms of

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\* See Guttman, *Die Philos. des Sal. ibn Gabirol*, pp. 35 sqq.

† See Doctor, *Die Philos. des Josef (ibn) Zaddik*, pp. 16 sqq.

the latest modern philosophy and science, retaining its comprehensiveness, its unity, its earnest spirit, and its educational ideal. When this is done, our education will cease to be chaotic and tentative, and become consistent, comprehensive, and aimful, from the kindergarten to the university, from the cradle to the grave and, further, forever further.\*

THOMAS DAVIDSON.

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## PHILOSOPHY AND THE ACTIVITY-EXPERIENCE.

IT requires no very profound acquaintance with the trend of the literature of general and specialized philosophy of the last twenty-five years to detect a decidedly practical turn in the recent speculative tendencies of philosophy and philosophers. The older conception of philosophy or metaphysics as an attempt to state (more or less systematically) the value of the world for thought is being slowly modified, if not altogether disappearing, into the attempt to explain or to grasp the significance of the world from the stand-point of the moral and social activity of man. The philosophical student must be to some extent conscious of the difference in respect both of tone and subject-matter between such books as Stirling's "Secret of Hegel," E. Caird's "Critical Philosophy of Kant" (the first editions of both works), Green's "Prolegomena to Ethics," and the most recent essays and books of Professors A. Seth † and James ‡ and Ward § and Sidgwick || and Bald-

\* In preparing this article, I have been very largely indebted to the works of Prof. Dieterici, of Berlin, to whom belongs the credit of having made the "Brothers of Sincerity" and their *Cyclôpædia* known to the modern world.

T. D.

† "Man's Place in the Cosmos," a book consisting of essays and reviews, published by the author during the last four or five years. They all advocate "humanism in opposition to naturalism," or "ethicism in opposition to a too narrow intellectualism." The review of this book by Dr. Douglas, in *Mind* (January, 1898), seems to me to emphasize its main characteristic,—the necessity, even for speculative purposes, of a recognition of the practical problems of man's life.

‡ "The Will to Believe," 1897.

§ "Progress in Philosophy," art. *Mind*, 15, p. 213.

|| "Practical Ethics;" Essays.